

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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21

ACTION EA-06

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P R 231015Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4009

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 3643

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SREF, LA

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM

1. MR. KONGKHAM THANNASACK, POLITICAL ASSISTANT AT THIS MISSION FOR FIVE YEARS, HAS INFORMED US THAT HE, HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN CAN NO LONGER SAFELY LIVE IN LAOS BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH THE U.S. AS ONLY LAO WORKING IN A SUBSTANTIVE POSITION FOR POLITICAL SECTION MR. KONGKHAM IS IN A SENSITIVE AND HIGH VISIBLE SPOT. HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN A NUMBER OF DELICATE POLITICAL SITUATIONS WHICH--IN OUR INTEREST--HAVE BROUGHT HIM IN CONTACT WITH WIDE RANGE OF LAO OFFICIALS (INCLUDING LABOR LEADERS, STUDENTS, POLITICIANS, POLICE AND JUSTICE OFFICIALS, ETC.) FOR EXAMPLE, HE MEDIATED BETWEEN TWO SIDES DURING TAPS GUARDS STRIKE DURING SUMMER 1974. IN SHORT, HE IS THOROUGHLY AND IRREMEADIABLY IDENTIFIED WITH THIS MISSION.

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2. MR. KONGKHAM IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF LAO

EMPLOYEES OF THE AMERICAN MISSION (ALEAM). THIS POSITION HAS AUTOMATICALLY PUT HIM ON THE FIRING-LINE IN NUMEROUS LABOR-MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS, IN WHICH HE HAS SOUGHT CONSCIENTIOUSLY TO SERVE BEST INTERESTS OF BOTH PARTIES. HOWEVER, IN LAST TWO DAYS, HE HAS BECOME THE SPECIFIC TARGET OF UNUSUALLY VICIOUS AND POINTED THREATS TO HIS PERSONAL SECURITY. DEMONSTRATORS/THUGS AT USAID HEADQUARTERS HAVE NOTED THAT VIENTIANE IS "SMALL TOWN" AND THAT THEY WILL CATCH UP WITH "TRAITORS" SUCH AS KONGKHAM.

3. A 1969 GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, MR. KONGKHAM HAS BEEN A ACTIVE OFFICER IN THE ASSOCIATION OF LAO ALUMNI OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES; HE IS PRESENTLY ITS SECRETARY-GENERAL. MOREOVER HE IS ON THE BOARD OF LAO/AMERICAN ASSOCIATION (LAA) AND HAS LONG BEEN ACTIVE IN LAA AFFAIRS. EARLIER, HE WAS EMPLOYED BY USAID/LAOS (1963-65) AND TAUGHT LAO LANGUAGE AT FSI (1969-70).

4. IN VIEW OF MR. KONGKHAM'S UNUSUALLY "HIGH-RISK" POSITION HERE AND THE TIGHT CONTROLS WHICH THE LAO GOVERNMENT HAS IMPOSED ON TRAVEL OF LAO CITIZENS, WE PROPOSE TO ASSIST HIM, HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN TO REACH SAFE-HAVEN IN UDORN AS WE HAVE DONE FOR HIGH-RISK CATEGORIES OF VIETNAMESE. ONCE IN UDORN HE AND HIS FAMILY WILL AWAIT REPLY TO THIS CABLE REQUESTING FORMAL POLITICAL ASYLUM IN U.S. ON THEIR BEHALF.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE LONG ANTICIPATED THAT, IF SITUATION IN LAOS DETERIORATED TO SIGNIFICANT DEGREE, MR. KONGKHAM'S POSITION IN THIS MISSION WOULD BECOME UNTENABLE. UNFORTUNATELY, PRESENT EVENTS HAVE EVOLVED SO RAPIDLY THAT HE FINDS HIMSELF NOT ONLY IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION WITH RESPECT TO HIS POLITICAL SECTION AND ALEAM DUTIES BUT ALSO UNDER VERY REAL THREAT TO HIS PHYSICAL SECURITY AND POSSIBLY TO HIS LIFE. WHILE WE CAN ANTICIPATE THAT A VERY SMALL NUMBER OF OTHER LOCAL EMPLOYEES MAY EVENTUALLY FALL INTO SIMILAR CATEGORY, WE KNOW OF NONE WHO QUALIFIES MORE COMPLETELY OR MORE URGENTLY THAN MR. KONGKHAM. WE THEREFORE REQUEST PRIORITY REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE BE SENT TO BOTH AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE AND AMCONSUL UDORN.

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CHAPMAN

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